

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Sanford Bishop

Opening Statement

May 8, 2012

-As Prepared For Delivery-

“Thank you for yielding Mr. Chairman and thank you for your hard work. I would also like to thank our subcommittee Members for their hard work as well.

“We all sat here in this very room and listened to testimony on a wide range of issues that range from the Department of Defense's infrastructure program to the healthcare needs of our Nation's Veterans.

“I believe that a robust hearing process is a vital first step in this long process.

“Mr. Chairman as you know, the subcommittee's allocation is flat this year and even though I strongly disagree with the path the majority has taken by not honoring the allocations provided by the Budget Control Act, I do believe the draft Milcon/VA bill is a decent bill.

“I am pleased that the subcommittee recommendation includes \$546 million for the construction or replacement of 10 Department of Defense Education Activity Schools (DODEA).

“I believe that providing the funds for DODEA schools will not only help our servicemembers children get a quality education in safe facility, it will also give our servicemembers one less

thing to worry about.

“Mr. Chairman, I am also pleased that the subcommittee recommendation includes \$127 million for the second increment of the medical center replacement in Landstuhl.

“As you know, a large portion of casualties from Afghanistan are treated there. I am pleased that we continue to support this project.

“Mr. Chairman, moving to the Veterans Affairs title, I must say that I am pleased that the mark meets the discretionary budget request in all areas of administrative expenses, research, medical care, information technology, and facilities.

“Mr. Chairman, I would like to note that I agree with the bill language that fences off funding for the DOD/VA integrated health record IT initiative until the two Departments meet certain steps. I believe this language will motivate the DOD and VA to move faster to get this program up and running.

“I also agree with the changes to the VA construction accounts that change the period of availability from no year money to five year money. This change brings the VA in line with all of the other federal agencies and hopefully will speed up the process.

“Finally, Mr. Chairman I am very pleased that after we met for over an hour to discuss the bill, you chose to craft a clean bill or as we called it in our meeting a ‘no drama bill.’

“Mr. Chairman, I believe that your mark has done a lot of responsible things and if this bill remains intact I believe that we will be able to report out a bill with bipartisan support.

“One last thing I would really like to thank the staff for working so hard to get us to this point, however we still have a long way to go.

“Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back.”